

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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## SECRETARY HICKEL TO BLOCK INTERSTATE 95 UNLESS WILDLIFE PRESERVE PROTECTED

Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel today announced he will not permit Interstate Highway 95 near Philadelphia to be built across Tinicum Wildlife Preserve until safeguards are assured for protecting the natural values of the refuge.

The Secretary made the announcement in Philadelphia following a personal air and ground inspection tour of the Tinicum Marsh area.

"Tinicum is the only true tidal marsh in Pennsylvania, and the construction activities on this major highway will destroy half its original area," Secretary Hickel said.

"The marsh is particularly important because it is natural open space located close to an urban population, and such areas are becoming scarce.

"As long as a significant part of Tinicum remains in its natural state, thousands of people can have a chance to see wild waterfowl and unspoiled environment.

"The highway simply will not be permitted to cross the refuge land unless acceptable steps are taken to make the highway compatible with the purposes for which the land is managed."

The Secretary said that Representative John P. Saylor of Pennsylvania's 22nd Congressional District and Senator Hugh Scott, whose home is in Philadelphia, have appealed to him to protect the marsh's wildlife values, and he has assured them that "unless adequate replacement lands are made available we intend to oppose this project with all the power at our disposal."

Approximately 87 acres of the Wildlife Preserve are Federally owned, and the proposed highway route would cross this Federal portion.

Construction work has now approached to within about half a mile of the wildlife preserve.

Secretary Hickel said he has authority to veto the routing across Federal wildlife refuge lands under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, as amended in 1966; the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966; the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956; the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956; and the Department of Transportation Act as amended in 1968.

The Secretary said he and Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe are working together to "salvage a significant portion of the remaining marshes."

He said Interior has submitted to the Transportation Department a description of the marsh areas which must be acquired as replacement and mitigation for the destruction caused by the highway project.

The Army Corps of Engineers has custody of a 100-acre tract adjoining the Interior Department land, and Interstate 95 would also pass over the Corps parcel.

Secretary Hickel has written to Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor, in a letter dated April 10, suggesting that if the Corps has no further need for the 100 acres it be declared excess so it might be transferred to the Interior Department.

Earlier, objections by the Interior Department to the Corps of Engineers blocked the highway contractor's application for a permit to dredge several million cubic yards of sand, gravel and muck from the nearby area, but the work continued.

The Pennsylvania Department of Highways has not required the highway contractor to protect the natural resources or recreational and aesthetic values of the marsh, Interior officials said.

As many as 10,000 waterfowl a day use the Tinicum Marsh during spring and fall migrations, and about 45,000 persons visit the marsh each year. It is a primary waterfowl nesting and feeding area in the northern Atlantic Flyway.

Tinicum Marsh, overall, contains about 1,240 acres, of which about 1,000 acres are privately owned in Delaware County, Pa. Construction activity already has caused extensive damage to marsh on these privately owned lands. However, some of this private marsh--still undamaged--would most likely have to be acquired to mitigate further destruction.

The remaining 240 acres of the marsh lie within the city limits of Philadelphia. Of this, 70 acres are Federally owned and the remainder is city property.



These Federal and city tracts are jointly managed as the Tinicum Wildlife Preserve, which was designated a Registered Natural Landmark in 1966, under a program administered by the National Park Service.

The 70 Federal acres, plus an additional 17-acre parcel owned by Interior in Delaware County, are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. The Corps of Engineers-controlled 100 acres also lie in Delaware County.

In the early 1930's the marsh was prime waterfowl habitat, and it remains largely valuable for that purpose today. Birds using it are mostly pintails, black ducks, blue-winged teal and a few Canada geese.

A map of the Tinicum area is attached.

# TINICUM MARSH

- 
 Remaining Marsh Area
- 
 Marsh Area Destroyed By Highway Construction

